

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING

Report of damage done to Governor's Island, New York Harbor, by storm in November.

DECEMBER 18, 1885.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington City, December 16, 1885.

SIR: I have the honor to forward herewith, for the information of the Senate, copy of reports concerning the damage wrought by the storm of November 23 and 24, 1885, to the north and west sides of Governor's Island, New York Harbor, and to invite attention to the estimate of the Department for continuing the sea-wall around the island. The subject was brought to the notice of Congress by the President February 20, 1883, and an estimate was submitted December 1, 1884 (see House Ex. Doc. No. 5, Forty-eighth Congress, second session), but no action was taken thereon.

An estimate for the work has again been submitted, which will be found on page 171 of the Book of Estimates for 1887, House Ex. Doc. No. 5, Forty-ninth Congress, first session.

Very respectfully,

WM. C. ENDICOTT,
Secretary of War.

The PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE OF THE SENATE.

FORT COLUMBUS,
Governor's Island, New York City, November 25, 1885.

SIR: I have the honor to invite the attention of the major-general commanding to the destruction wrought by the storm of yesterday and the day before on the north and west sides of the island.

The old retaining-wall of lumber on the north side has been destroyed, and the slopes washed away in many places. The retaining-wall of loose rubble-stone on the west front has also been swept away.

A good granite wall, similar to that recently finished on the Buttermilk Channel side of the island, should be constructed as soon as an appropriation for the purpose can be obtained, otherwise a vast amount of destruction may be accomplished in a year or two. The wall on the Buttermilk Channel front has been the means of saving $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres of valuable land to the Government; so valuable, I have been informed, that if it were for sale to-day it would be worth one million and a half dollars.

DAMAGE TO GOVERNOR'S ISLAND, NEW YORK.

Were it not for the labor of the military prisoners now undergoing sentence at this post, the beach on the north and west sides of the island would be rapidly swept away, and the beauty of the island hopelessly marred by the tide-water.

It is hoped that an earnest effort may be made to have a proper wall constructed, so that this valuable property may be saved before it is too late.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

R. H. JACKSON,

Major Fifth Artillery, Bvt. Brig Gen., Comdg. Post.

The ASSISTANT ADJUTANT-GENERAL,

Hd. Qrs. Dept. of the East, Governor's Island, New York City.

[First indorsement.]

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE EAST,

Governor's Island, N. Y., November 27, 1885.

Respectfully referred to the chief quartermaster of the department for remark.

By command of Major-General Hancock.

S. N. BENJAMIN,

Assistant Adjutant-General.

[Second indorsement.]

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE EAST,

OFFICE OF CHIEF QUARTERMASTER,

Governor's Island, New York Harbor, November 28, 1885.

Respectfully returned to the assistant adjutant-general, Department of the East, concurring in the views of the commanding officer Fort Columbus, N. Y., as to the necessity of extending the sea-wall around the island. There being, however, no means available for doing the work, it is recommended that proper action be taken to secure an appropriation.

ALEX. J. PERRY,

Colonel and A. Q. M. General, U. S. A.

[Third indorsement.]

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE EAST,

Governor's Island, N. Y., December 2, 1885.

Respectfully forwarded for the information and consideration of superior authority in connection with the action taken in previous years in regard to the completion of the sea-wall around Governor's Island, so as to cover the points so much exposed.

I venture to express the earnest hope that the action in this matter proposed at the last session of Congress may be perfected during the session which commences on Monday next, December 7, 1885.

WINF'D S. HANCOCK,

Major-General Commanding.

[Fourth indorsement.]

WAR DEPARTMENT, ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,

Washington, December 5, 1885.

Respectfully referred to the Chief of Engineers for remark.

By order of the Secretary of War.

J. C. KELTON,

Assistant Adjutant-General.

[Fifth indorsement.]

OFFICE OF CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, U. S. ARMY,

December 8, 1885.

Respectfully returned to the Adjutant-General, U. S. Army.

In the annual report of the Chief of Engineers for 1884, an estimate was submitted "for sea-wall at Governor's Island, New York Harbor, \$50,000."

No appropriation, however, was made by Congress for this work, and the estimate was again submitted in the report of the Chief of Engineers for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1885.

JOHN NEWTON,

Chief of Engineers,

Brigadier and Brevet Major General.

[Sixth indorsement.]

ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington, December 9, 1885.

Respectfully submitted to the Secretary of War, with report from the Engineer Department.

An item of \$50,000 for the sea-wall in question was included in the estimates of appropriations for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1887. (*Vide* Book of Estimates, 1886-'87, page 171.)

R. C. DRUM.
Adjutant-General.

OFFICE OF POST QUARTERMASTER,
Governor's Island, New York Harbor, November 28, 1885.

SIR: I have the honor to represent the urgent necessity for the immediate construction of a sea-wall on the north side of the island to prevent further damage.

During the last storm the waves washed away part of the wooden bulkhead built some years ago to protect the bank, broke into the slopes and carried down the earth and sod, eventually depositing it on the side and bottom of the channel; this damage is now being repaired as rapidly as possible to prevent its extension, but even when the work is finished there is nothing to prevent its repetition in the next northeasterly or northwesterly storm; the latter being the direction from which the prevailing winds come for the next four months.

The building of a wall for the north side similar to that on the southeasterly end of the island would not only prevent further damage, but would, as in the latter case, add much to the value of the Government property, the increase on the southeasterly end being as estimated by proper authority as much as \$15,000,000; in addition to the increase in monetary value, the erection of the wall would add much to the safety of navigation by inclosing a dangerous area of shallow water, over which are scattered many boulders, which are visible only at extreme low tide.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

H. J. REILLY,
First Lt., Fifth Artillery, A. A. Q. M.

[Indorsement.]

FORT COLUMBUS, NEW YORK HARBOR,
November 28, 1885.

Respectfully forwarded to headquarters Department of the East. I request that this letter be appended to mine, upon the same subject, of the 25th instant.

R. H. JACKSON,

Major Fifth Artillery, Bvt. Brig. Gen., U. S. A., Commanding Post.

The COMMANDING OFFICER,
Fort Columbus, New York Harbor.

[Extract from Senate Ex. Doc. No. 76, Forty-seventh Congress, second session.]

UNITED STATES ENGINEER OFFICE,
Room 59 Army Building, Corner Houston and Greene Streets,
New York, February 15, 1883.

GENERAL:

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There is, properly speaking, no sea-wall on the west side, except the short circular portion, 400 feet long, which surrounds Castle William. The other construction, called a sea-wall, between Castle William and the old hospital, on the south side, is simply a dry wall, laid near the high-water line, which was hastily built out of surplus stone from the south wall, and was intended to protect the outer slope of a projected battery on that side against sea encroachments. It has answered this temporary purpose very well; but to perfect the plans of sea-wall projected for the improvement of the entire island the dry wall should be replaced by a wall near the low-wall line, connecting the south end of the Castle William branch with the west end of the south wall. Such a wall will be 1,500 feet long, and if extended from Castle William eastward to connect with the wall fronting the arsenal grounds, the

length will be increased to 2,972 feet. The protection by a sea-wall of this island, where so many Government interests are concentrated, cannot be too earnestly presented to the attention of Congress, and whilst this letter had for its immediate purpose the recommendation of \$15,000 for completing the improvement on the east side, I would also invite attention to the importance of an additional appropriation of \$75,000 for completing the wall on the west side and its extension eastward to connect with the unfinished wall on the arsenal front.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

G. L. GILLESPIE,

Major of Engineers, Bvt. Lt. Col., U. S. A.

Brig. Gen. H. G. WRIGHT,

Chief of Engineers, U. S. A., Washington, D. C.

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